

Letters from Kathleen P. Baldwin to Alexander Graham Bell and Mabel Hubbard Bell, from July 25 to August 3, with transcript

MRS. BALDWIN'S LETTERS.

(From Fort William, Quebec, about the Experiments at Petawawa).

July 25: — I think if you were here, you would be bored stiff, things are so beastly slow. Only now, after one whole month is the shed nearly completed. It is not yet finished, although I told Mrs. Bell so in my last letter. However enough has been done on it to allow the “Dart” to be assembled. They already have center panel and the two wing sections put together, and the machine, I means the engine, has been taken out of the crate.

They has rather a hard time of it yesterday on account of its being the Sabbath. (July 24) The engine had to be brought up to shed from some other building, and of course the men are not allowed to work on Sunday — also its against regulations to use the horses — but that engine simply had to get to the shed by hook or by crook. So after puzzling their brains for some time finally the brilliant idea of calling out the ambulance was conceived and it worked splendidly.

A poor man had been killed out on the ranges was the excuse given, and the driver, being a good natured man, shut his eyes, and all went well.

John arrived Friday night, just at the tail end of almost a weeks continuous rain. We didn't see him till Saturday, Casey in the morning, and I in the evening. Oh! poor John was just about sick of things generally the army in particular. The rain was most inopportune, as

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things always appear so much worse in wet weather, and it certainly was abso-bally-lutely (a newly acquired word found in a book I'm reading) rotten.

He stayed here all night, and then they both trotted off bright and early to spend the Sabbath in work — and it was a glorious day too, which helped a whole lot. I'm sure John sees everything through rose colored spectacles now.

He of course will stay in camp, so I don't expect to see very much of him. Casey has been going over every day for the last 10 days, although at first it wasn't necessary so it was very nice for me to have him all day. Now I read, and sew, and play bridge — at least I did last week when it rained so much — but now I won't be quite so industrious.

There are quite a number of congenial people in the hotel, and I really like it here. It is so much better than I expected. Casey sometimes brings some of the officers back with him in the evening, when we dance and play bridge— however it isn't a patch to Baddeck, and I often wish the government had never written, although really and truly I think it is a fine chance for the boys.

I'm afraid I haven't given as much information about their work as you would like to have heard, but I really think I have told you every thing there is to tell. In a few days there will be more.

With love believe me affectionately, (Signed) Kathleen P. Baldwin.

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Aug. 2: — 10.45 A.M. This time I have a little more news for you. The “Dart” made three short flights early this morning of one half mile each, carrying John and Casey quite easily. They started a fourth flight but it wasn't quite so successful, for on the return to the shed, the sun was very low and bright and right in their eyes, and they misjudged the distance above a small hollow, and struck the knoll on the other side rather badly.

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In his letter to me this A.M. Casey doesn't say if much damage was done to the machine, but says altogether it isn't so bad, and the engine which he says is a dandy proved its efficiency, and that is all they brought the old machine for.

John got a few scratches in the face, but wasn't in the least bit hurt.

The boys have been trying to prevent it leaking out that they intended making a few preliminary jumps privately, but one of the reporters, there are two staying in this hotel, said, he knew all along about it, but he won't divulge the source of his information. Of course now they both know of it. As Casey told me I could show them his letter — one of them had already left for the camp when I came into breakfast — and the other is the one to whom apparently my news was quite an old story. To every one who makes enquiries as to when they expected to fly it was always the same answer “Oh! In about another week or so”.

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In this way nearly everyone was deceived. I forgot to say that the wise reporter put nothing in the paper concerning his “find”, as he knew they wanted it to be kept quiet.

I think it must have leaked out somehow over there, probably the reporters kind friend has something to do with it, for Casey told me last night, that they wanted to try the “Dart” out several times, days I should say, before making anything public. However its out now, and I don't think it make much difference as the engine has come up to scratch beautifully, and nothing else matters. Casey says they are going to transfer the engine to the new machine as soon as possible.

It arrived the day before yesterday. She is all unpacked and ready to assemble. I am going to quote the opening of Casey's letter as I have not mentioned it.

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"We rather foolishly tried to "Dart" this morning before being certain of the new balance. It was not our intention to make a real flight, but just satisfy ourselves as to the balance, and thrust before anyone saw the machine at all in action".

This is the part I don't quite understand, but tomorrow I shall be able to give more explicit information. When the launch comes back at noon to-day perhaps I can find out something more. I will leave my letter open in case I do. 3.30 P.M. I have heard nothing more about the flights so I shall wait till to-morrow to give details. I have heard nothing more about the flights so I shall wait till to-morrow to give details. I want 5 this to catch the 5 o'clock boat. With love to you ad Mrs. Bell, lovingly, (Signed) Kathleen S. Baldwin.

Mrs. Baldwin to Mrs. Bell

Fort William, August 3: — I am keeping Casey in bed to-day, as he got his leg a bit scraped yesterday, and it is rather sore, so I think the less exertion he takes the better — otherwise, though, he is perfectly well, and enjoyed a very good breakfast.

Well, it's hard luck isn't it? to say the least?

I haven't seen John yet, and don't expect to for some days as his face is anything but beautiful to behold, so I imagine he will keep himself in hiding till it looks a little more presentable. I know he feels it very keenly, but of course he and Casey are not by any chance going to let anyone know just how disappointed they really are.

Naturally they were both very fond of the Dart and they hated to see her smashed up. Still she did her work, though not quite enough, as they would so much have liked to get a few more tries out of her before transferring the engine.

As I told Mr. Bell yesterday, the engine couldn't possibly have been more satisfactory, and Casey's impressions are that she made much better speed than the old one.

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In case you are wondering the extent of John's damages, he got his nose and cheeks pretty badly scratched. Casey says he looks as if he had been in a prize fight.

Casey is going to scribble a few lines to Mr. Bell, telling him a few of the details which I can't give as well 6 Fort William has turned into quite a gay place. Saturday night's boat usually brings quite a crowd up from Pembroke who stay over Sunday and it is unusually festive then. This Saturday more than usual came and the Hotel was taxed to the limit.

We danced, which is really quite a common occurrence, I think I have never danced so much before. It is rather jolly having the officers come over.

The boys intended flying early Sunday morning but it was too windy.

Oh! dear, I can't get it out of my head, and the part that is really troubling me is the fact of the new machine. Not having had as much practice with the Dart as they should have makes it doubly uncertain.

I shall stop now and give my better half a chance.

With very much love, I am,

Yours ever lovingly, (Signed) Kathleen.